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## The Barometer

Henry E. Eccles

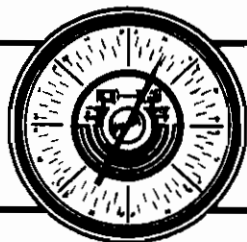
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# THE BAROMETER

Editor  
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In the 3 April 1980 issue of *Christian Science Monitor* I wrote the following:

"One must omit much to get on with something."

—Alfred North Whitehead

\* \* \* \*

The United States' plan to deploy 200 mobile thermonuclear missiles, each on a special railroad track with 23 hardened shelters covering about 20,000 square miles in Utah and Nevada, is estimated to cost at least 30 billion dollars.

They are designed not to make a preemptive first strike at the Soviet weapons sites, bases, industry or cities but rather to provide the capability to conduct what is known as controlled counterforce nuclear war against Soviet missile sites.

The purpose is to pose such a large number of possible targets for Soviet missiles that the probability of disarming the United States by a "first strike" counterforce missile attack would be so low that the Soviets would have little incentive to attack.

This program is part of the policy of nuclear deterrence and as such its merits and demerits are usually argued in language and logic so esoteric and so speculative that informed, honest, and patriotic men can reach and plausibly support, opposite conclusions. Each makes a personal, intuitive and unquantifiable evaluation of the inherent critical risks. Therefore, we must cut through the confusion of argument to reach the critical issues. These are:

1. What is the nature of national security?
2. Is counterforce nuclear action a valid concept to insure such security?

3. What is the special nature of command decision and control in nuclear action?

Other issues, such as the cost effectiveness of the system, its effect on inflation and on the environment and the feeling that the system is the child of bureaucratic politics rather than sound strategic analysis, while pertinent, are not decisive.

**NATIONAL SECURITY:** National security is both the security of the state itself as a sovereign political entity and the security of the institutions of the nation. *These institutions grow out of and protect the values of the people of the nation.* Thus, National Security should be seen as:

**EXTERNAL SECURITY:** national political sovereignty, territorial integrity, and access to economic resources.

**INTERNAL SECURITY:** economic sufficiency, freedom of enterprise, of expression, of elections, and of the judiciary.

Each category of security and of freedom has its own constituency of special interest which is in continuing competition with other interests for economic and political preference and power. Because resources are always limited, this complex competition makes it impossible to formulate and carry out a no risk national security policy. There is no way in which the risks can be calculated scientifically. Instead, risk evaluation is a matter of intuitive, political, economic, and military judgment.

### FUNDAMENTALS OF NUCLEAR ACTION

In conventional war, a major command error can be overcome by extraordinary effort by that command itself or in another area of the field of action.

Nuclear weapons are so swift and so destructive that their use leaves no room for error in the Commander-in-Chief's decision process or the operation of the command and control system.

Time and timing are critical: time available to make the decision, time required to carry out the decision, timing of the various phases of the action, particularly the time required to change targets in response to unanticipated developments.

In nuclear warfare, mistakes are irretrievable. Thus, nuclear weapons command and control is a system of absolutes. Once the weapon is loose, the decision cannot be reversed.

The weak link in this vital system is the sense of moral responsibility for making the critical decision to initiate the use of nuclear weapons. This cannot be resolved by scientific analysis. It is the ultimate expression of one's deepest sense of human values. It must be made in a few critical minutes during which the Commander-in-Chief comes to the shocking recognition that right now, he must decide the life or death of tens of millions of his fellowmen.

## 108 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

Any decision to use a nuclear weapon would require the imposition of authoritative control over most of the normal activities of the nation to prepare for the vast physical destruction and social, economic, and political disruption which certainly would follow even a limited nuclear exchange.

Even the imminent threat of such exchange can create panic. No one can foresee the consequences of the news that the President has gone to a sheltered command post while two hundred million of his people are exposed to extinction.

### CONCLUSIONS

The situation today is:

Repeated studies show that even a relatively small nuclear exchange would produce catastrophic long-range harm as well as immediate damage and casualties.

There is no effective civil defense in the U.S.A. nor is there any evidence that one will be adequately funded and competently managed.

The concept of counterforce nuclear warfare as a means to assure national security is being challenged. Recent events have shown the fallibility of the Presidential decision process. The reliability of the operation of the command and control system under stress is seriously questioned. The cumulative effect of these and of the secondary issues is to diminish rather than enhance both the external and internal elements of national security.

The nature and degree to which the MX system would influence Soviet action is purely conjectural. The present situation with both "strategic" and "theater" weapons is complex and dangerous enough, without spending enormous resources on a project which will further complicate the situation without any assurance of accomplishing its supposed objective.

Therefore, we should abandon the MX missile system program, continue to depend on the present general system of nuclear weaponry to provide deterrence against nuclear attack, make every effort to reduce nuclear weaponry, and accept an acknowledged risk in so doing.

/s/Henry E. Eccles

HENRY E. ECCLES  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

## **NINTH MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM**

1-3 October 1980

The United States Air Force Academy will host its Ninth Military History Symposium on 1-3 October 1980. The symposium, entitled "The American Military and the Far East," will examine the experience of the U.S. armed forces in East Asia and the Pacific since 1900. Program sessions include: (1) American Objectives and Strategy in the Far East, (2) American Pacification and Occupation in Asian Lands, (3) The Influence of the Orient on the American Military, and (4) The Impact of the American Military on Asian Societies.

Noted scholars taking part in the proceedings include: Akira Iriye, Roger Dingman, Norman Graebner, John Gates, Ron Spector, D. Clayton James, Frank Kierman, C.I. Eugene Kim, Alvin Coox, Theodore Ropp, and from Japan, Sadao Asada and Ikuhiko Hata. Also, several individuals who have both first-hand military experience in the Far East and scholarly credentials, to include General Richard Stilwell, USA (Ret); Captain Paul Schratz, USN (Ret); Colonel Roy Flint, USA; and Colonel John Schlighr, USAF, will deliver papers or comment.

Other noted scholars participating include Frank Vandiver, Philip Crowl, Samuel Wells, Alan Millett, Stanley Falk, William Whitson, and Brigadier General E.H. Simmons, USMC (Ret).

For further information about the symposium write Major Harry R. Borowski, Department of Hisrory, USAF Academy, CO 80840.



## 110 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

### ADVANCED RESEARCH PROGRAM—MILITARY HISTORY

The US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013, sponsors an "Advanced Research Program in Military History" as one means of stimulating research and study at the Army's major repository for materials in the history of military affairs. Awards will be made only to cover expenses while conducting research and writings at this facility. Recipients will be designated "Advanced Research Project Associates."

Applicants must complete a written form describing the subject, scope, and character of their project; the time estimated for residence at MHI; how MHI facilities, personnel, and materials will aid in their research project; and a careful estimate of expenses to be incurred for which this grant is requested. Forms can be obtained from the Institute.

Careful consideration will be given to each project's usefulness for USAMHI and the professional field of military history, as well as the United States Army. Inner-disciplinary projects are encouraged. Both civilian and military scholars in the field of military history are invited to apply to Director, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013.

*Completed applications must be returned by 1 January 1981.*

